



# Frequently Asked Questions about Washington's Electronic Product Recycling Program

from Ecology's Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program

A new Washington law requires that computer and television manufacturers provide free recycling of their products throughout the state. The collection services will be available to households, small governments, small businesses and charities by Jan. 1, 2009. The Legislature directed the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to oversee this program.

## **Q: How are manufactures expected to participate in this program?**

**A:** All manufacturers whose products are sold in or into Washington state must register with Ecology and be a member of a recycling plan. Manufacturers must participate in the standard plan, developed by the Washington Materials Management and Financing Authority, or petition Ecology to operate an independent plan.

## **Q: Who can participate in an independent plan?**

**A:** Independent plans must represent at least a five percent share of television and computer sales in Washington. Several companies can join together to meet the five percent market share necessary to use an independent plan. In order to qualify to create and participate in an independent plan, participants can not be new entrants or white box manufacturers.

New entrants and "white box manufacturers" (products without a label) may not participate in any independent plan. A new entrant is defined as a manufacturer of televisions that have been sold in the state for less than 10 years or a manufacturer of desktop computers, laptop and portable computers that have been sold in the state for less than five years. Manufacturers selling both televisions and computers that may be considered a new entrant under **only one** of the qualifications will not be classified as a new entrant by the new law.

## **Q: What are "orphan," "white box" and "free rider" brands and who is responsible for them?**

**A:** Orphan products are computer products or televisions that lack a manufacturer's brand or whose manufacturer is no longer in business and has no successor in interest. Responsibility for these products is shared among all participating manufacturers. The plan participants decide how they will allocate costs for these products among their members.

"Free Riders" are manufacturers that sell a brand of product temporarily into a market, then change brand labels, in an attempt to avoid responsibility. The new law assures that there are no free riders.

"White box" products are those products that do not have a brand label affixed and can not be ascribed to any particular manufacturer. The new law requires that brand labels must be permanently affixed to all electronic products sold in or into the state. Due to this requirement, the problem with white box products will diminish over time.

## **Q: What level of service is required to be provided?**

**A:** Collection services must be provided in every county and city with a population over 10,000. The services must be provided to households, small business, small governments, school districts and charities.

**Q: Who is responsible for the recycling costs?**

**A:** Manufacturers of electronic products are required to pay for all program costs. Households may only be charged for “premium collection services” such as individual home pick up services provided by a delivery company. Small businesses, small governments, school districts and charities that have large quantities of computers and televisions must transport them to processing centers themselves. Collection and transportation costs are covered for charities that provide collection services for manufacturers. For computers and televisions from charities, school districts, small businesses and small governments in larger quantities than can be handled at collection sites or curbside services, processing costs are covered at a minimum. Manufacturers will also pay Ecology an annual registration fee and planning review fee to cover operating costs.

**Q: How does Ecology know the amount of product a manufacturer is responsible to take-back?**

**A:** The responsibility for each manufacturer will be based on the percentage of their branded products recycled through the program each year.

**Q: What is the Materials Management and Finance Authority?**

**A:** A new entity called the Materials Management and Financing Authority (Authority) will plan and implement a recycling program on behalf of manufacturers participating in the standard plan. All manufacturers must participate in the plan developed by the Authority unless they have been granted the ability to create and implement their own independent plan by Ecology. The Authority’s member manufacturers will oversee and finance the Authority’s standard program. The Authority’s Board of Directors is made up of participating manufacturers who are appointed by the state.

**Q: How will this law be enforced?**

**A:** Manufacturers that do not provide services cannot sell their products in or into Washington. Retailers cannot sell products manufactured by non-participating manufacturers. If a warning is not heeded, fines will be issued.

**More information:**

Contact Jay Shepard at [wa-recycles-electronics@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:wa-recycles-electronics@ecy.wa.gov) or 360-407-7040.

- The Washington Electronics Products Recycling Act:  
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6428>
- Department of Ecology’s Electronic Product Recycling Web site:  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/eproductrecycle>
- Sign up for the WA-Recycles-Electronics e-mail list to receive updates:  
<http://listserv.wa.gov/archives/wa-recycles-electronics.html>

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